

## French Short Story Writers of the Late 19th & 20th Century

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Like the other literature courses I've offered at OLLI so far, this course will focus on short stories exclusively. Due to my French upbringing, I was steeped in French literature very early on. What I'm hoping to contribute to this class is both a keen interest in the short story and an insider's viewpoint into French story-telling and culture.

Each week will center on a specific author, starting with the prolific and beloved Colette, as well-known for her countless short stories as for her novels. Well before the rise of what's now dubbed "flash fiction," her story "The Hand" sets a perfect example of the genre. We'll also read and discuss Maupassant, whose short story "The Necklace" has remained a classic to this day. Though Marcel Aymée may be unknown to US readers, he was a famous writer: "The Man Who Walked through Walls" has long been part of the school curriculum in France. Simone de Beauvoir wrote only a handful of short stories in her long career; studying one of them will give us the opportunity to discuss one of the most extraordinary women authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Next we'll read "The Silent Men" by Albert Camus, still the most widely read French author in the US to this day. Last, we'll read a story by contemporary writer Anna Gavalda whose 1999 collection "I Wish Someone Were Waiting for Me Somewhere" put her on the French literary map.

This course has been designed around group discussion. Participants will be asked to analyze each story in terms of theme(s), meaning, point of view, etc, based on a list of study questions available on line in advance. Depending on class size and dynamics, we might break into sub-groups to facilitate this exchange, which typically takes over an hour.

During the second part of each session, additional information on each authors' life and body of work will be provided through clips from interviews and/or documentaries so that participants get to see and hear the author directly. When audiovisual material in English is not available, I will introduce him/her with a PPT presentation using photographs, quotes etc.

### Week by Week Outline:

**I. Colette, "The Hand;"** <http://theliteratesims.net/eng1cM/week03/thehand.pdf>;

**II. Guy de Maupassant, "The Necklace"** <http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/necklace.html>

**III. Marcel Aymée, "The Man Who Could Walk Through Walls"**

<http://stresscafe.com/translations/pm/index.htm>

**IV. Simone de Beauvoir, "Marcelle" from *When Things Of The Spirit Come First***

**V. Albert Camus, "The Silent Men"** <https://disverbis.wordpress.com/2012/01/08/vintage-storytelling-the-silent-men-a-short-story-by-albert-camus/>

**VI. Anna Gavalda, "Leave" from *I Wish Someone Were Waiting For Me Somewhere***